

From: KristiEspinoza
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Comment: Northeast NPR-A Planning Area

Dear Northeast Planning Area,

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I write to you today because I am one of the many Americans who care about this great land and all of her beauty. So I ask you to please, please protect the Teshekpuk Lake and other valuable wildlife areas in the National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska. To do this, we must go back and adopt a necessary alternative that protects more special fish, wildlife and subsistence hunting areas and includes more protective stipulations. As a minimum action, the BLM should adopt Alternative A, the "No Action" Alternative.

002
General

Horribly, the current plan, which concerns the northeast area of Alaska's National Petroleum Reserve, proposes to open 96 percent of the area to oil & gas development. In addition, it would virtually demolish protections for critical wildlife habitat of Teshekpuk Lake, reducing these scientifically supported protections by 75 percent. Not only does this make NO sense and serve only special interests, it is not even supported by public opinion. Also, this is a complete, blatant reversal of Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) 1998 plan, in which 87 percent of the planning area is open to leasing and 600,000 acres are off limits around Teshekpuk Lake to protect important habitat and subsistence use for caribou and waterfowl. The 1998 plan followed science and American values; this new proposal does not.

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As you know, the vast majority of scientific evidence proves that opening the land to oil/gas development would devastate local fish and wildlife. Teshekpuk Lake and nearby wetlands make up a unique, diverse tundra-wetland biosystem; a vital complex in the circumpolar Arctic that houses thousands of waterfowl and caribou. Dozens of thousands of birds, including brant, greater white-fronted geese, Canada and Snow geese gather in the Teshekpuk wetland system to molt their flight feathers and are thus vulnerable to human disturbances. Protect these creatures!!!

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Wildlife

Thousands of birds nest in this area because there are few natural predators (save for greedy corporate interests), including many threatened and endangered species. For example, the threatened spectacled eider listed under the Endangered Species Act nests in the area that the current proposal will demolish. These endangered and threatened species will also suffer from the increased number of predators, such as gulls, ravens and foxes that are attracted to oil fields. The entire ecosystem would be thrown out of balance.

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Caribou

I'm sure you've heard of the 45,000-animal Teshekpuk Lake Caribou Herd that attracts public interest, educational interest, and tourist dollars. This herd, which migrates annually to the lands around Teshekpuk Lake to have their babies and seek refuge from disease-spreading insects, will be severely threatened by the development proposed in the current proposal. How? Well, if caribou are forced to move to less desirable habitats, calving numbers could decline, which would reduce the population; a negative impact not only to the ecosystem, but to American citizens as well - many Alaska Natives depend on the herd as a subsistence resource. Take away their food by passing the current proposal,

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Subsistence

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and you threaten their lives.

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For all of these reasons - scientific, moral, and just common sense - the BLM should absolutely NOT open up the land to leasing and development of oil and gas interests.

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Instead, the BLM must provide a more balanced, science-based approach to energy development and environmental protection by placing the Teshekpuk Lake and Colville River Special Areas under PERMANENT protection, and also strengthen requirements and regulations of monitoring and lease stipulations.

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As a bare minimum, the BLM should adopt Alternative A, the "No Action" Alternative, which retains current protections for the critical fish and wildlife habitats around Teshekpuk Lake. I strongly urge you, however, to do more.

Protect America and all her inhabitants. Adopt Alternative A.

Thanks for your time.

Sincerely,

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Attached: None